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Pasadena cremation scandal back in courts

PENNILESS: *The Sconces face a series of lesser charges, and could be sentenced to six years in prison.*

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Eight years after a sensational first trial, the former owners of Lamb Funeral Home have returned to court to face charges they took body parts from corpses to sell them.

This time, however, there's little media stir. Laurieanne and Jerry Sconce usually go unnoticed by reporters, photographers and television crews swarming the downtown Superior Court building for the murder trial of O.J. Simpson.

The Sconces, along with their son, David, 37, formerly owned and operated a respected mortuary on Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena and a crematory in nearby Altadena.

In 1987, the three were arrested. Investigators alleged the Sconces had, among other things, conducted multiple cremations and pulled out gold teeth and body parts from corpses.

After a trial in 1992, Laurieanne, 57, and Jerry, 60, were acquitted of three of the more serious charges. A mistrial was declared on six others.

David Sconce was a suspect in a highly publicized Camarillo murder-by-poison case in the late 1980s.

Charges were dropped in April 1991 against David Sconce, who authorities believe gave oleander poison to Timothy Waters, a 24-year-old Burbank mortician who died in 1985.

The Sconces now face a variety of lesser charges, including a few left undecided by the 1992 jury, some remaining from 1987 and others dismissed by a Pasadena judge in 1989 and later reinstated by a state appeals court. If convicted, they could be sentenced to six years in prison.

Subjects of three paperback books, Laurieanne and Jerry break out brown-bag lunches during court breaks. They no longer own the mortuary and said they live nearly penniless, unemployed in Arizona.

Deputy District Attorney Gloria Mas told jurors this week 21 family members would testify they never gave the Sconces permission to remove body parts from their relatives and that the signatures on authorizations were forged.

She said bank officials would testify that from February 1984 to 1986, Laurieanne Sconce received $100,000 interest that should have been kept in prepaid funeral service accounts.

But Rucker portrayed the couple as victimized by their son, who independently operated the Altadena crematory and a business supplying body organs to laboratories. The son hid his misdeeds from everyone, including his parents, Rucker said.

Murder charges dropped link to OJ Simpson case

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